

SCHOOL

Everyone is required to attend school from age seven until their 18th birthday. If you are between the ages of seven and 18 and do not go to school regularly, you can be taken to juvenile court.

Since 1983, high school seniors have been required to pass a proficiency test to receive a regular diploma. If you drop out of school, when you turn 18 or older, you can take a test and receive a G.E.D. (Graduate Equivalency Diploma) certificate.

Every school must have rules about certain things such as: dress code, punishment, suspension, smoking, class attendance, etc. The rules must be posted in each school. If you break the rules of your school, you can be suspended or expelled.

If you are suspended from school:

- 1. You must be told what you are accused of and the evidence against you.
- 2. You must be given the opportunity to request a hearing to explain your side of the story.
- 3. Your parents will be notified.

Children who are found to be carrying drugs or weapons on school property, or who assault a teacher, may be expelled from their current school setting for up to one calendar year.

Principals have the right to search students’ lockers and all other areas of the school if they think there might be illegal drugs or dangerous weapons on the school property. They may also search you, your purse, pockets and your car. You cannot refuse these searches, but you can tell other people that you do not consent to them. Students and visitors on school grounds are subject to search upon reasonable suspicion by the principal.

If you drop out of school you will not be able to obtain a driver’s license until your 18th birthday.

If your family receives public assistance, benefits can be reduced if you do not attend school.

PLEASE NOTE:

This pamphlet explains some of your rights and responsibilities as a minor. You should be aware that laws, including those in the pamphlet, can be changed. To get more up-to date answers to your questions, contact the people and offices listed under each subject.



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YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MINOR



“I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession a duty.”

-John D. Rockefeller Jr.

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MINORS

In Tennessee, a minor is any person under the age of 18. When you turn 18, you have all of the rights and responsibilities of an adult except that you cannot buy or drink alcohol until you are 21.

As a minor, you have the right to be supported and protected by your parents. This means they must give you necessary food, shelter, clothes, education and medical care. Your parents can choose your friends, clothes and religion. They can also give you jobs to do around the house and tell you what time you must be home.

Your parents must give their permission for you to get a driver’s license, get married and receive some types of medical treatment.

If you refuse to obey the reasonable rules your parents have made or if you run away from home or refuse to go to school, you can be taken to a juvenile court.

HOTLINE NUMBERS

National Runaway Switchboard 1-800-621-4000

The national Runaway Switchboard provides confidential counseling and can tell you where the nearest runaway shelter is located. They will also let you make a long distance call home at no charge. The Switchboard can also call your parents for you and give them a message without telling them where you are. Home-Free is a service provided by the Switchboard which will arrange free transportation for runaways to their home town. All that is required for free transportation home is verification that the child is a runaway, and that the child can return home.

Teen Sexuality 1-800-255-GWEN

The GWEN-line’s professional staff provide information on sexuality, teen pregnancy and other related topics. The hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Tennessee Red-Line 1-800-889-9789

The Tennessee Red-Line provides information on alcohol and drug abuse resources from local counseling services to domestic violence shelters

S.T.D. National Hot-line 1-800-227-8922

The S.T.D. National Hot-line provides free written information about sexually transmitted diseases upon request. The S.T.D. Hot-line is also available to answer questions about S.T.D. symptoms, treatment and prevention.

TennCare Hot-Line 1-800-669-1851

The TennCare Hot-line can answer questions about the state operated health insurance plan. For questions about covered medical services, mental health services or applications call 741-4800 in Nashville or 1-800-669-1851 statewide.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

You can be arrested or taken into custody for:

- 1. Delinquent offenses: acts that would be crimes if committed by adults (traffic violations, theft, assault, disorderly conduct, vandalism, etc.);
- 2. Status offenses: acts that are against the law only for minors (drinking alcohol, using tobacco, curfew violation, skipping school, running away, being unruly, etc.);
- 3. Being dependent, neglected or abused: you can be taken from your home if your health or safety is seriously threatened or if there is a chance you may leave town to get away from the court. You can only be taken away from home if there is no other way to keep you safe.

If you are charged with a delinquent offense:

- 1. You have a right not to answer questions, except you must tell the police your name, age, address and parents’ names. Anything you say can be used against you in court.
- 2. The police only have to tell you your rights if they ask you questions.
- 3. You have a right to have your parents told where you are and why.
- 4. You have a right to talk with a lawyer. You can ask to have one appointed for you.
- 5. You have the right to stop talking anytime during questioning and wait until your lawyer comes.
- 6. If you are placed in detention, you have all the above rights, plus the right to a detention hearing within three days (not counting weekends and holidays).
- 7. If you are placed in detention for a status offense, your detention hearing must take place within 24 hours (not counting weekends and holidays).
- 8. The law says youth should never be placed in an adult jail unless the case is transferred to another court for criminal prosecution.

Youth found guilty by the juvenile court of committing an alcohol or drug offense may lose their driver’s license for up to one year.

Laws are very complicated and confusing even to adults. Before you talk to the police or other authorities or sign anything, it is important for you to talk with an adult who knows the law and can help you decide what is best for you. If you have to go to court, it is important to get a lawyer. If you cannot afford a lawyer and want one, ask to have one appointed for you.

HEALTH

For most types of medical treatment your parents must give their consent. However, you can receive information and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) without your parents’ permission or knowledge. You can also get birth control information and contraceptives to avoid pregnancy without your parents’ permission or knowledge.

If you get pregnant, you have several choices:

- 1. Have the baby and keep it.
- 2. Have the baby and give it up for adoption.
- 3. Have an abortion. (*See Age Restrictions)

If you need help or want more information on birth control, STDs, pregnancy, prenatal care or pregnancy options, you can call or go to your local health department. There is a public health department in every county in Tennessee and all of them provide STD screening referral and/or treatment, family planning services, pregnancy testing, and birth control. Prenatal and postnatal care programs are available in some counties. Look in the phone book under the name of the county you live in (Davidson, Madison, Green, etc.). Then look for **Health Department**.

There is a statewide toll-free number for information on sexuality, teen pregnancy and other related topics. The number is 1-800-255-GWEN; hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The line is staffed by professionals. For court advocacy questions concerning teen pregnancy call the Court Advocacy Line at 1-800-435-7495. The Court Advocacy Line hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

TENNCARE

Children under the age of twenty-one (21) can apply for TennCare Medicaid at any time. TennCare Medicaid has two (2) main groups: Categorically Needy and Medically Needy. You must meet all of the rules of one of these groups to qualify. Your income and resources will count, too. Resources are things like bank accounts, cars and land.

To apply and find out if you qualify for TennCare Medicaid, go to your County DHS Office or call:

Family Assistance Service Center:

1-866-311-4287

MENTAL HEALTH

If you have problems that you feel you cannot discuss with your parents or a close adult friend, teacher, minister, etc., you can get help or talk with someone at a mental health center. Each center has its own rules

about whether you need your parents’ permission to receive counseling. The center can also help determine if there will be a cost for the counseling. You can ask about these things when you call for an appointment.

Every county in Tennessee is served by a local mental health center, although there is not a facility in every county. To find the one nearest you , look in the yellow pages of the phone book under **Mental Health Services**. You may also call the TennCare Partners Advocacy Line at 242-7339 in Nashville or 1-800-809-9957. The mental health center can also help with alcohol and drug problems.

If you or someone you know is having a mental health emergency, call Youth Villages Specialized Crisis Services in your region.

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| 1. Memphis Region: | 1-866-791-9226 |
| 2. Rural West Region: | 1-866-791-9227 |
| 3. Rural Middle Region: | 1-866-791-9222 |
| 4. Nashville Region: | 1-866-791-9221 |
| 5. Upper Cumberland Region: | 1-866-791-9223 |
| 6. Southeast Region: | 1-866-791-9225 |
| 7. Northeast Region: | 1-866-791-9224 |

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, in Nashville or the 615 area code, call 244-7444 . If outside Nashville, call 1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-SUICIDE. In extreme emergencies you can always call 911. You can also visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org for more information.

WORKING

If you are under 14, the law does not allow you to work, except in certain jobs. These laws are for your safety and protection. Some of the kinds of work you may do include: housework or work for a parent or guardian in a non-hazardous occupation; farm work; selling or delivering newspapers; errand and delivery service work by foot, bicycle or public transportation; work in which you are self-employed (example: babysitting).

If you are 14 or 15, you may not work during school hours. When school is in session, you may work no more than three hours a day, 18 hours a week, no later than 7:00 p.m., or earlier than 6:00 a.m. During the summer, you may work no more than eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, no later than 9:00 p.m., or earlier than 6:00 a.m.

If you are 16 or 17 and enrolled in school, you may not work during school hours. When school is in session, you may work no later than 10:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday nights. With notarized permission from your parents or guardians, you may work no later than midnight three of the Sunday through Thursday nights. This restriction does not apply to Friday or Saturday nights, nor when there is no school. There are no restrictions on the number of hours per

HOW OLD DOES A CHILD HAVE TO BE IN TENNESSEE TO:	
<u>EDUCATION</u>	
Start kindergarten	Five years old by 9/30
Start first grade	Six years old by 9/30
Must start kindergarten	By seven years old
Drop out of school	18 years old
<u>EMPLOYMENT</u>	
Hold gainful employment	14 years with restrictions
	16-17 years with fewer restrictions
Work any hours	18 years old
<u>DRIVING</u>	
Obtain a restricted driver’s license for a motorcycle	14 years old
Obtain a learner’s permit	15 years old
Obtain a restricted hardship driver’s license	14 years old
Obtain an intermediate “restricted” driver’s license with signature of parent/responsible adult	16 years old
Obtain a n intermediate “unrestricted” driver’s license	1-year after being issued “restricted” driver’s license
Obtain a regular driver’s license	18 years old
Drop out of school	No license until 18 years old
Adjudicated on alcohol or drug offense	Lose license for one year
<u>JUVENILE JUSTICE</u>	
Be a juvenile (subject to the juvenile court)	Under 18 years old
Be an unruly juvenile	Under 18 years old
Be sent to training school	Under 18 years old
Be tried as an adult in criminal court for serious offenses against persons	No lower age limit
Be tried as an adult in criminal court for other delinquent offenses	16 years old
Be sent to adult prison	Over 18 years old or convicted as an adult
<u>OTHER</u>	
Obtain services for family planning, pregnancy and STDs without parental consent	No age restriction
Release a child for adoption	A parent of any age
Agree to be adopted	14 years old
*Have an abortion	18 years or younger with appropriate consent
Be subject to child abuse and neglect laws	Under 18 years old
Be emancipated for specific purposes	By judicial review - no age stated
Marry without parental consent	18 years old
Marry with parental consent	16 years old
Marry with approval of court	Under 16 years old
Vote	18 years old
Obtain a credit card	18 years old
Receive a commercial tattoo	18 years old
Purchase tobacco products	18 years old
Purchase liquor, wine or beer	21 years old